



Forest Service Planning Rule Collaboration

Background

On February 24, 2010 USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell announced a series of collaboration events to provide opportunities for public discussion on the development of a new Forest Service Planning Rule. These include a Science Forum, three national roundtables, Tribal Consultation and collaboration, internal and interagency collaboration and roundtables in all nine Forest Service regions.

The National and Regional Roundtables will build on information from the Science Forum and will be framed in part around the principles detailed in the rule making Notice of Intent (NOI), published December 18, 2009. The objectives of the roundtables are to provide stakeholders opportunities for collaborative learning and sharing of perspectives; to dialogue about what is working and not working with the current forest planning process; and, to provide input about what they believe should be contained in a new Forest Service planning rule, and how it should address critical substantive issues and the process of forest plan development. The results from the Science Forum and roundtables, along with the individual comments received during the 60-day formal comment period on the NOI, will be used by the Forest Service rule writing team to help develop the proposed rule and a draft environmental impact statement.

What is the Planning Rule?

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976 requires every national forest or grassland managed by the USDA Forest Service to develop and maintain a Land Management Plan (also known as a forest plan). The process for the development and revision of the plans, along with the required content of plans, is outlined in the planning regulations, or Planning Rule. Individual forests and grasslands then follow the direction of the Planning Rule to develop a land management plan specific to their unit.

The Planning rule deals with these issues:

- Minimum content of Plans
- When and how plans are revised
- When and how plans are amended
- Who makes the Plan decisions
- How the public is involved
- Analysis, assessment, or evaluation requirements
- How the decisions are subject to appeals or objections
- Relationship of Plans to Projects

Forest Plans, by contrast, deal with issues such as these:

- Multiple use goals and objectives
- Management requirements (standards and guidelines)
- Management Areas
- Designation of suitable timber land
- Wilderness recommendations
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements

Learn More

More information, background materials, meeting notes and summaries can be found at the US Forest Service Planning Rule Website: fs.usda.gov/planningrule

Engage in further discussion online at the Planning Rule Blog: blogs.usda.gov/usdablogs/planningrule

Learn more about Meridian Institute: www.merid.org

Learn more about the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution: www.ecr.gov



Planning Rule Revision Timeline

Forest Service Rulemaking Effort

Proposed Rule and DEIS development
Formal Public Comment, National and Regional Roundtables, Science Forum, Tribal Consultation and collaboration, Inter-agency and internal Forest Service collaboration

Final Rule and DEIS Development
Formal Public Comment and additional Stakeholder Engagement

Build on collaborative foundation for improved plan development and implementation

Dec.
18,
2009

Notice of Intent (NOI)

DEIS Published & Proposed Rule Published (Expected Dec. 2010)

FEIS Published (Expected Sept. 2011)

Record of Decision & Final Rule Publication (Expected Nov. 2011)

Legend

Red lettering = Legally Required Events
Blue lettering = Added Stakeholder Engagement

Abbreviations

DEIS Draft Environmental Impact Statement
EIS Environmental Impact Statement